

[C. M. Crenshaw]

1

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 [106?]

Page #1

FC

C.M. Crenshaw, 66, was born at Gonzales, Tex. He was taught to ride a horse at an early age, and was riding the range at the age of ten. when he was employed by the McLaren Ranch, near Gonzales as a range rider. He was employed by the L Bar D Ranch at Palo Pinto when he was 14, went on a trail drive at the age of 16, another when he was 18 and was employed by the GLD Ranch. He was employed by the DDD Ranch in the Indian Territory when he was 19, then went back to the CAD Ranch near Palo Pinto, Tex., when he was 20. Four Yrs. later, he was employed by the BXB Ranch near Olney, Tex. He left the BXB to be a peace officer at Breckenridge, Tex., for 8 Yrs., then went to buying, selling, and trading cattle on the Ft. Worth Stock Yds. He now resides at 4136 Avenue J, Ft. Worth, Tex. His story:

"Well, I wasn't what you might call, 'born on the range', but I spent the best part of my life handling cattle so I believe I know the ins and outs of it. As a kid, I'd always wanted to be a cow poke but my family lived in Gonzales, Texas, where I was born on January the sixth, 1871.

"Since cattle formed the major industry in my days as a kid, it wasn't so hard for me to borrow a hoss here and there, and so learn to ride. My Uncle, Cy Crenshaw, whom I

Library of Congress

don't recall anything about now excepting he went [est?] and disappeared, we figured the Indians must have got him, held me on my first hoss. After he gave me a start, I borrowed from everybody that would lend, and sometimes swiped me one for awhile. Riding different hosses that away, I got to where I could stand a little bucking. I really thought I could stand a lot by the time I was 10, and asked my dad for several months to let me take a job as a cow poke. He finally gave in and let me work for the McLaren boys.

"I can't recall how many head they run, nor the brand they carried. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas
2 The reason for that, I guess, is because I was so young at the time that I failed to pay much attention to anything but the hoss I was riding. I rode all they had, anywhere from 20 to 30 head, and that was about all I was interested in as long as I was with them.

"Along about the time I was 14, I went West to Palo Pinto, Texas, and was hired by old Man Dalton, on the L Bar D Ranch. The name of the ranch was his brand and was made like this: L-D. The old man run about 2,500 head. It wasn't as big a ranch as a good many of them were, but it was a lively one with several good riders and one of the best shots the West has ever seen. The rider I liked best was named, Gus Thompkins.

"Gus owned his own string of hosses. He owned about seven hosses and kept them in the remuda like the rest of the hands kept their hosses. Two of his hosses turned out to be the best cutters and peggers I ever saw. One of them was named, 'Cyclone', and the other, 'Dynamite'. They were named that before they were ever broke because they gave so much trouble, having so much spirit. Gus being a regular bronc stomper, he stayed with them 'til he broke their spirit down to his liking, then trained them to the work. He was over a year with each hoss, only working each one a part of the day. Those hosses could finally go into the herd, and when Gus made them realize which critter was wanted, they'd stay with it 'til it was lassoed and outside just like if it was a game, or a race. It was a sight to see those hosses perform.

Library of Congress

"About the shooting end, we could all shoot a little but some of us were better at it than the others. The best shot on the spread was Knewt Short. It seemed to the rest of us that Knewt 3 never had to take aim at all. He could spring from any position and shoot the object that we'd pick out for him, and have it anywhere we wanted to, as long as it was in plain sight. Many's the rock I've seen him shoot to get it started to rolling, then blast it with all six shots and never let it stop nor miss a shot while it was moving. We always called him, 'Old Eagle Eye', because he had such keen eyes. He wasn't much of a man to look at. He was just about the size of man that a bully always picks out to work on. Of course, we cow pokes never just stood around and practiced shooting and riding. We always did that when we weren't doing anything else.

"Old man Dalton's cattle run with his boy's, Charlie, cattle, so we had around 6,000 head in a roundup when we rounded up the other rancher's cattle in the neighborhood. Charlie's spread was the 'CAD' and that was his brand too. We all worked pretty much together and the two spreads were almost one. Would have been one of the boy had lived with his dad and kept his headquarters together.

"I quit the L Bar D in '87, and went to work for another of the old man's boys. George Dalton run the 'GLD' spread a few miles from the 'CAD', and the L Bar D. George run around 3,000 head with the 'GLD' brand. George was better off than the other two because he was more of a plunger. He'd buy up a lot of cattle in other places and drive them to the market. That's what gave me the chance to go to work for him.

"My first trail drive was while I was working for the 'GLD'. George bought up 700 steers from several cattlemen around, Lampasas, Texas, and several of the waddles and myself drove them to his place in Palo Pinto, county. I'll never forget that drive. [We?] had plenty of water and never had a bit of trouble, not even a [stampede?] but it 4 was my first trail drive and I had realized my ambition to 'Go up the trail'.

Library of Congress

"My next trail drive was when he got a contract to supply the 'Chain Circle C' Ranch in the Territory with 1100 head. He bought the critters from the 'Yoakley' outfit in Palo Pinto county, and we drove the herd up the trail to the Territory. They had their headquarters at a little buffalo camp supply station by the name of, Navajo, Texas, across the river from the Chain Circle C's ranch.in the Territory. The brand was made like this: , and was burnt on the left hip.

"My trip to the Territory gave me a sight of the country up there so I decided to try to work up there. After the Fall Market roundup on the GLD, I lit out for the Territory in the winter of '89. I went around from one place to another 'til I got a berth on the Three D Ranch, owned by old Dan Waggoner. I worked all winter on the 'check line'. The DDD spread man so big, and ran so many head, that they had men hired to do nothing but ride the check line. they'd have a cabin every 20 miles, and two check line riders would bunk up there every night. In the morning, they'd start out in opposite directions 'til each one met a rider from the opposite side. On the way, they'd have to run those critters back that were straying off the ranch, keep them out of the river, and do the several things a cow poke has to do on a ranch.

"I didn't like this way of being a cow poke. Seemed to me like we were just cogs in a machine because we had a set job to do, and nothing else. It was lonely out there too. Nobody to see and talk to but the other check line riders, and they'd be full of rumor about this and that and when it was run down, they'd be nothing 5 to the rumors at all. We'd be a long time finding it out, though, and that gave us something to occupy our minds. My buddy gave us something to occupy our minds that really did the job.

"Since there were a lot of Indians roaming around, I was always scared some of them might get rambunctious and want to scalp me. I knew I'd never done anything to them but I also knew that wouldn't keep them off of me if they started after me. Well, I was worried all the time. He never done me any good either, because he kept telling me tall tales about

Library of Congress

the Indians and how they'd sometimes scalp a fellow, then if they were really hungry, cut him up and fry him. Now, that got under my skin, I'll tell you for sure.

"One day he and I were just about to sperate and go our ways on the check line, when an Indian rode past us on the gallop. No, that wasn't anything uncommon but my buddy roped the Indian, drug him off his cayuse and drug him four or five feet before he stopped. That Indian got up from the ground, mad as a wet hen. Then, what did he do but twirl his lasso like he was going to do it again. The Indian run for the woods, and was out of sight before either one of us could do anything.

"We then separated, and went our ways. The more I thought about the matter, the more I could see myself being cut up into little chunks. I had two weeks pay coming right then, but I thought, 'What's two weeks pay to getting killed?', so I struck out for Palo Pinto county, where they didn't have no Indians. They still owe me that two weeks pay because I didn't want it bad enough to go after it.

"I went to work for the 'CAD' outfit in Palo Pinto county awhile after I got back. In '95, I took a job with the 'BXB' outfit which was located about five miles from Olney, Texas, in Archer 6 county. They run about 3,000 head with the 'BXB' brand burnt on the left hip. While they didn't have so large a place, their cattle run over a large territory and kept us waddles busy ranging them in.

"The job with the BXB was my last cow poke job. I went from that to a peace officer for eight years at Breckenridge, Texas, then came to Fort Worth.

"I don't recall so many tall tales told on the range but I saw a pretty wild country there then. I can't give you dates for what I know but the records at the places I mention will bear me out. I was still a kid, and was leaning against the front wall of a saloon, watching the stage coach come in with a roar, stop, then watched the customers get out. One of them men that was getting off, started toward the saloon and an officer started toward him, he started

Library of Congress

to running and the sheriff called out for him to halt. He didn't but kept running and a crowd got after him, and somebody in the crowd shot him down.

"Another time, I was leaning in almost the same spot, waiting for the coach to come in when I noticed a man leaning against the general merchandise store across the street. He wasn't doing anything but leaning there, and didn't move 'til a man came out of the saloon. Then, both men walked toward each other, snaked their guns out of their scabbards at the same time, but the man I'd been watching wasn't touched when they shot. He ran to the hitching post, untied his hoss, mounted, hollered for me to get out of the way, and rode on out of the town as fast as he could go. There wasn't a soul on the street 'til after those shots were fired, then people just boiled from the stores and the saloon. I don't recall the man being caught, or anything being done about it at all. 7 "That was the way men lived those days. The man that was the best and fastest shot, usually got what he wanted if he didn't hurt over one or two people while getting what he wanted. I saw one comical thing, though. I saw two men standing behind trees, shoot at each other 'til their ammunition was all gone. [Il?] the damage they'd done was to peel the bark of the trees they were standing behind. When their ammunition was exhausted, their friends rushed in and separated them before they done any damage.

"One night, in '94, I was standing in front of a store that was across the street and a little ways down from in front of a saloon. I stopped there because I noticed the sheriff, I was in Graham, Texas at the time, was loitering in front of the store directly across from the saloon. I thought there might be something stirring if I waited a moment. After a little, two men walked out from the saloon, and started mounting their hosses from the street side. The sheriff hollered, 'Halt!' One of the men stopped but the other kept mounting and fired from under his hoss's neck. Henry Williams was the sheriff's name, and the man got him because he was pretty badly wounded.

"When the other man saw that the sheriff was shot, he mounted his hoss, and they both tore out. I then saw him come to his knees, even though he was bleeding badly, and shoot

Library of Congress

at the men. One of them were shot, the other was caught by a posse the next day. Sheriff Williams still lives there, and his boy is sheriff now.

“They didn't use the knife much in those days. The only time I ever saw a knife used was once when some fellows were chasing a boy that was the goat for everything the crowd could think up to pull on him. They had this kid plum scared to death of them because 8 they'd bragged how they'd do this and that to him, and he thought they meant it. This crowd got after him one day, and the kid got on a hoss. Well, this wasn't anything to the rest of the crowd because they all had hosses so they got on one too. One of the fellows that had the best hoss, was way out in front and he rode his hoss right along side the other boy's hoss. He was in the act of lifting the boy from his saddle when he slashed back with a double bladed knife, and cut the arteries in the other kid's neck. Of course, there wasn't a thing that could save him then, so he died.

“All this gives you an idea of the rough life they lived in those days, but there's another side that I haven't talked about yet. That is the hospitality. Nowadays, all the houses are locked up tight. In those days, there were latch strings on every outside door, but they were on the outside so you could open it and go in anytime. This was done so that you might never go hungry as long as they had a bit themselves. The old timers would holler at you to come on in and eat before you got into the ranch yard. They tried to give you the very best they had, and weren't stingy with it either but would keep it at you 'til you were filled up, then gave you a bunk.

“I once lost all my money in a crap game at Ranger, Texas, and started out for Palo Pinto with six bits in my pocket. I was afoot, as I'd lost the whole hog, all I had. It took me eight days to get to Palo Pinto, and I got there with about 35 cents. All the way along, the different people had invited me in for a stay, and I just took my time along. 'It would certainly be a better world to live in now if people nowadays would do that way to each other.